

Common inspection framework for further education and skills 2009



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Introduction

The Common inspection framework for further education and skills 2009

The *Common inspection framework for further education and skills 2009* – the common inspection framework – was devised by Her Majesty's Chief Inspector in line with the Education and Inspection Act 2006.¹ It is based on the common evaluation schedule which informs all of Ofsted's inspections. It sets out the judgements inspectors will make during inspection.

The common inspection framework also sets out the principles that apply to the inspections of further education and skills under part 8 of the Act. The common inspection framework comprises:

- Ofsted's principles of inspection
- the common evaluation schedule.

The common evaluation schedule is at the heart of the inspection and regulation processes. It sets out the structure of the inspection and identifies the key aspects against which judgements will be made.

The common evaluation schedule:

- provides inspectors with a structure for gathering evidence and reporting which is common to all Ofsted's inspection and regulation activity, thereby promoting greater coherence and opportunity for collaboration across inspection remits
- enables users to become familiar with Ofsted's work across all remits
- allows greater integration between and across inspection and regulation events
- will ensure that inspection and regulation judgements from across all Ofsted's inspections can be brought together to provide a coherent view of an area, and help to inform the comprehensive area assessment.

What follows is a summary of the key features of the full common inspection framework, which is published separately as part of the *Handbook for the inspection of further education and skills from September 2009*.² The handbook has two parts:

Part 1: Guidance for inspectors and providers on the preparation for, and conduct of, inspections.

Part 2: The full common inspection framework and guidance on how it will be used by inspectors to award the main and contributory grades.

Principles of inspection and regulation

The principles of inspection and regulation reflect Ofsted's values and ensure that we carry out our statutory duties efficiently and effectively. The principles focus on the interests of service users – children, young people, parents, adult learners and employers. They promote improvement in the services we inspect or regulate, and they promote value for money. They also take full account of our policies on equality and diversity.

All inspections carried out by us or on our behalf must comply with the following principles.

Further education and skills inspections will:

- support and promote improvement
- be proportionate
- focus on the needs of users
- focus on the needs of providers
- be transparent and consistent
- be accountable
- demonstrate value for money.

¹ www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2006/ukpga_20060040_en_1

² *Handbook for the inspection of further education and skills from September 2009*; www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Provision inspected under the common inspection framework

The common inspection framework applies to the inspection of provision funded by the Learning and Skills Council, and the funding bodies that will succeed it, and the Department for Work and Pensions. This provision is provided by:

- further education colleges, sixth-form colleges and independent specialist colleges
- independent learning providers
- local authorities
- employers
- not-for-profit organisations
- higher education institutions providing further education.

Inspection of sixth forms in maintained schools is covered by the school inspection framework, which shares common inspection grade characteristics with the common inspection framework.

The different types of provision inspected under the common inspection framework include:

- education and training for learners aged 16–18 and 19+
- apprenticeships and Train to Gain
- informal adult learning
- nextstep
- learning provision in the judicial services
- employability programmes.

The common grading scale for all inspection judgements

A common grading scale will be used in making judgements for organisational inspections:

- Grade 1 outstanding
- Grade 2 good
- Grade 3 satisfactory
- Grade 4 inadequate.

Limiting grades

Any limiting grades are considered before the overall effectiveness judgement is made. Limiting grades relate to safeguarding, and equality and diversity as these are considered to be essential in assuring the quality of the development and well-being of young people and adults. The grades for these two aspects may therefore limit other grades, including the grade for overall effectiveness.

The common inspection framework 2009

The common inspection framework lists questions that inspectors must ask of every provider of education, training and development. (See also 'Structure of grades', page 11.)

The inspectors make a judgement on adequacy. The two categories are adequate and inadequate. A provider will be judged to be inadequate if it is given a grade 4 for overall effectiveness. A provider which is at least satisfactory in its overall effectiveness will not be judged to be inadequate overall.

Inspectors will also take account of the measures derived from the Framework for Excellence as a source of evidence, where applicable.³

The common inspection framework has taken into consideration the Every Child Matters outcomes.

Overall effectiveness

How effective and efficient is the provider in meeting the needs of learners and other users, and why?

The judgement on overall effectiveness is based on all the available evidence. Inspectors will take into account judgements on:

- the provider's capacity to make and sustain improvements
- outcomes for learners
- the quality of provision
- leadership and management.

Capacity to improve

- What is the provider's capacity to make and sustain improvements?

The capacity to make further improvements is a judgement about the ability of a provider to continue improving standards and progress based on what it has accomplished so far or to maintain exceptionally high standards.

All judgements on leadership and management, quality of provision and outcomes for learners contribute to the inspection of capacity to improve. Additional judgements are based on evidence of the impact of improvements implemented by the provider as shown in its track record and performance since the last visit by inspectors, where appropriate.

To make their judgements, inspectors will evaluate the extent to which:

- the provider has a sound track record of sustained improvement
- the provider sets and meets ambitious targets to improve outcomes for all learners
- the provider has a clear vision and appropriate priorities that will sustain improvement and raise expectations for all users
- the provider's processes for self-assessment and quality improvement include appropriate use of the views of users and lead to demonstrable impact
- the provider has an appropriate management structure and sufficient staff and other resources to carry through its plans for improvement
- staff at all levels contribute to securing sustained improvements
- governors or the appropriate supervisory body fulfil their duties and ask challenging questions to raise or maintain high standards and secure positive learner experiences and outcomes.

A. Outcomes for learners

A1. How well do learners achieve and enjoy their learning?

Inspectors will take into account:

- a) learners' attainment of their learning goals
- b) how well learners progress.

To make their judgements on a) learners' attainment, inspectors will evaluate the extent to which:

- learners attain their learning goals, including qualifications and challenging targets
- there are any significant variations in the attainment of different groups of learners
- learners' work meets or exceeds the requirements of the qualifications, learning goals or employment
- learners attend and participate as required.

To make their judgements on b) learners' progress, inspectors will evaluate the extent to which:

- learners develop personal and social skills, including, as appropriate, spiritual, moral and cultural aspects
- learners enjoy learning and make progress relative to their prior attainment and potential
- learners develop the literacy, numeracy, language and key skills required to complete their programmes and progress.

A2. How well do learners improve their economic and social well-being through learning and development?

To make their judgements, inspectors will evaluate the extent to which:

- learners develop relevant knowledge, understanding and skills which contribute to their economic and social well-being
- learners increase their employability
- learners progress to further learning and employment or gain promotion
- learners understand their rights and responsibilities at work.

A3. How safe do learners feel?

To make their judgements, inspectors will evaluate the extent to which:

- learners use safe working practices in learning and at work
- learners say they feel safe.

A4. Are learners able to make informed choices about their own health and well-being?

To make their judgements, inspectors will evaluate the extent to which:

- learners have the knowledge and understanding to enable them to make informed choices about their health and well-being.

A5. How well do learners make a positive contribution to the community?

To make their judgements, inspectors will evaluate the extent to which:

- learners are involved in additional community-based development activities and projects
- learners develop skills, knowledge and understanding relevant to community cohesion and sustainable development.

The common inspection framework 2009 continued

B. Quality of provision

B1. How effectively do teaching, training and assessment support learning and development?

To make their judgements, inspectors will evaluate the extent to which:

- learning and assessment are linked to initial and current assessments, and related activities are adapted to make sure they build on and extend learning for all learners
- interesting and appropriate teaching and learning methods and resources inspire and challenge all learners and enable them to extend their knowledge, skills and understanding
- technology is used effectively to promote and support learning, where appropriate
- staff have appropriate skills and expertise to provide good-quality teaching, learning, assessment and information and support services for each learner
- assessment of learners' performance and progress is timely, fair, consistent and reliable
- learners receive constructive feedback on their progress and how they might improve
- learners receive help to develop literacy, numeracy, language and key skills to support the attainment of their main learning goals
- learning, teaching, training and assessment promote equality and recognise diversity.

B2. How effectively does the provision meet the needs and interests of users?

To make their judgements, inspectors will evaluate the extent to which:

- the range, content and context of provision provides learners with a choice of subjects, levels and qualifications that are relevant to their medium- and long-term personal, career and/or employment goals

- provision is planned to provide coordinated progression routes
- the provider considers employers' views and identified training needs and information on performance, skills and labour demand
- arrangements for training and assessment are flexible to suit learners' and employers' needs
- enrichment activities and/or extended services, including work experience, contribute to learners' enjoyment and achievement, and their personal, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

B3. How effectively does the provider use partnerships to develop its provision to meet learners' needs?

To make their judgements, inspectors will evaluate the extent to which:

- the provider develops partnerships with schools, employers, community groups and others that lead to tangible benefits for learners
- provision is well coordinated, relevant to local communities and promotes social inclusion and sustainable development.

B4. How effective are the care, guidance and support learners receive in helping them to attain their learning goals?

To make their judgements, inspectors will evaluate the extent to which:

- learners receive appropriate and timely information, advice and guidance on their next step in training, education and employment
- learners receive individual care and support to promote their learning and development, and to help them achieve their potential.

C. Leadership and management

C1. How effectively do leaders and managers raise expectations and promote ambition throughout the organisation?

To make their judgements, inspectors will evaluate the extent to which:

- leaders promote very high standards in a positive and supportive culture that aspires to excellence
- the provider raises expectations through a clear and realistic strategy for planning and developing learning programmes and services
- demanding targets are set and met throughout the organisation
- the provider promotes and implements national and local priorities and initiatives that are relevant to learners, employers and local communities
- the provider uses data and information on learners' and employers' needs, and local and national skills needs, to plan and review the provision or service
- resources, including staff, accommodation, facilities and technologies, are developed and used to support learning effectively.

C2. How effectively do governors and supervisory bodies provide leadership, direction and challenge?

To make their judgements, inspectors will evaluate the extent to which:

- governors and supervisory bodies set the mission and strategic direction of the provider
- governors and supervisory bodies establish effective arrangements to monitor all aspects of the provider's performance
- governors and supervisory bodies make sure that their statutory duties – where applicable – are fulfilled.

C3. How effectively does the provider promote the safeguarding of learners?

To make their judgements, inspectors will evaluate the extent to which:

- learners are safeguarded and protected
- staff take action to identify and respond appropriately to users' welfare concerns
- safeguarding is prioritised
- providers work together with agencies and professionals to safeguard learners.

C4. How effectively does the provider actively promote equality and diversity, tackle discrimination and narrow the achievement gap?

To make their judgements, inspectors will evaluate the extent to which the provider:

- manages equality and diversity, particularly disability, gender and race, and actively promotes equality and diversity among staff, learners, employers, parents and other partners
- assesses the impact of its work in relation to equality and diversity and takes appropriate action in response to its findings
- makes sure training in equality and diversity is effective so that leaders, managers, governors or supervisory bodies, staff and learners understand their roles and responsibilities in relation to equality and diversity
- makes sure that all learners and staff are protected from harassment, bullying and discrimination, including those based with employers and at other sites external to the providers
- manages incidents and complaints specifically about disability, gender and race equality
- sets challenging targets and uses data to monitor, analyse and improve engagement and performance by different groups of learners

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- takes action to reduce any significant variation in outcomes between different groups of learners, to maximise their potential.

C5. How effectively does the provider engage with users to support and promote improvement?

To make their judgements, inspectors will evaluate the extent to which:

- the provider implements and monitors an effective strategy to involve learners and employers in the decision making of the organisation
- the views of different user groups are sought and acted upon to plan, manage and improve the provision
- external partnerships are promoted to ensure the needs of learners at all levels are met.

C6. How effectively does self-assessment improve the quality of the provision and outcomes for learners?

To make their judgements, inspectors will evaluate the extent to which:

- the provider has effective processes for monitoring and evaluating performance and tackling weaknesses
- the analysis of data on performance and progress is used to improve performance
- action plans have clear, ambitious and realistic targets that show how provision will be developed for learners and are implemented and monitored effectively.

C7. How efficiently and effectively does the provider use its available resources to secure value for money?

To make their judgements, inspectors will evaluate the extent to which:

- learners progress, develop skills and knowledge and attain their learning goals, taking account of their starting points
- the provider considers the views of users about the suitability and availability of resources
- resources are managed and used for the different activities to meet the needs of all learners
- the quality and availability of resources support all users
- the provider is committed to managing its resources in a sustainable way.

Working together

Code of conduct for inspectors

Inspectors must uphold the highest professional standards in their work and ensure that everyone they encounter during inspections is treated fairly and with respect. The code of conduct requires inspectors to:

- evaluate objectively, be impartial and inspect without fear or favour
- evaluate provision in line with frameworks, national standards or requirements
- base all evaluations on clear and robust evidence
- have no connection with the provider which could undermine their objectivity
- report honestly and clearly, ensuring that judgements are fair and reliable
- carry out their work with integrity, treating all those they meet with courtesy, respect and sensitivity
- endeavour to minimise the stress on those involved in the inspection
- act in the best interests and well-being of service users
- maintain purposeful and productive dialogue with those being inspected, and communicate judgements clearly and frankly
- respect the confidentiality of information, particularly about individuals and their work
- respond appropriately to reasonable requests
- take prompt and appropriate action on any safeguarding or health and safety issues.

Expectations of providers

In order that inspection and regulation are productive and beneficial, it is important that inspectors and providers establish and maintain a professional working environment based on courtesy and professional behaviour. Inspectors are expected to uphold the code of conduct but Ofsted also expects providers to:

- be courteous and professional
- apply their own codes of conduct in their dealings with inspectors
- enable inspectors to conduct their visit in an open and honest way
- enable inspectors to evaluate the provision objectively against the standards/framework
- provide evidence that will enable the inspector to report honestly, fairly and reliably about their provision
- work with inspectors to minimise disruption, stress and bureaucracy
- ensure the health and safety of inspectors while on their premises
- maintain a purposeful dialogue with the inspector or the inspection team
- draw any concerns about the inspection to the attention of inspectors promptly and in a suitable manner
- respect that inspectors will need to observe practice and talk to staff and users without the presence of a manager or registered person.

Working together continued

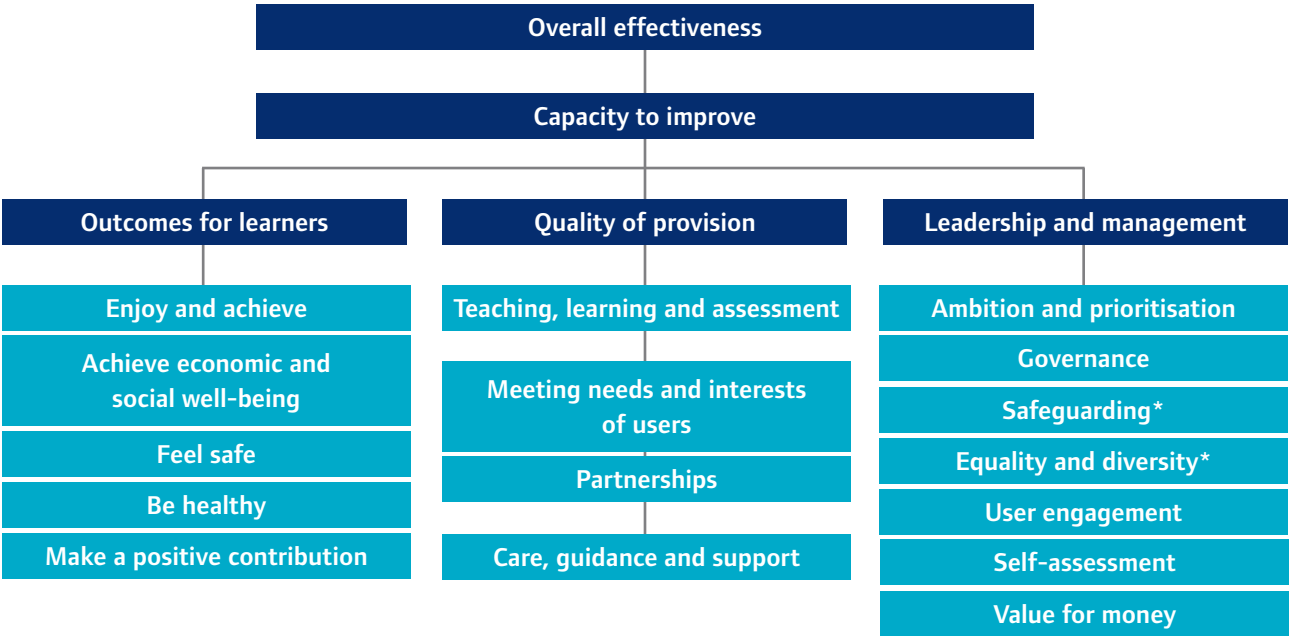
Complaints about inspections and regulation visits

Ofsted has a complaints procedure that sets out how providers can complain about their inspection if they or interested parties are dissatisfied with some aspect of their inspection. The complaints procedure sets out how providers can complain about their inspection and what will happen with their complaint.⁴

Terms used in the framework

Learner	A person seeking information or advice on learning opportunities or employment, taking part in education, training, and development programmes or activities, including student, apprentice, participant, client, or customer.
Provider	Any organisation, including consortia or partnership, involved in providing information and advice services, education, training or development programmes or activities, including colleges, independent training providers, local authorities, voluntary organisations, or employers.
Provision	The range and type of learning available.
Learning	Attainment of learning goals, including qualifications; development of skills; gaining knowledge and understanding, including information and advice on learning, and development and employment.
User	Young people, adult learners and employers and parents and carers.

Structure of grades



Key:

- Main grades
- Contributory grades
- * Limiting grades

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